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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/613,424	07/02/2003	Burns Phillips	50243-0001	5198
7590	04/05/2006			EXAMINER
Stephen J. Stark Miller & Martin LLP Volunteer Building, Suite 1000 832 Georgia Avenue Chattanooga, TN 37402-2289			COMSTOCK, DAVID C	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3733	
DATE MAILED: 04/05/2006				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/613,424	PHILLIPS ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	David Comstock	3733	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 25 November 2005.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-13 and 16-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1-13 and 16-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on 13 December 2004 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)	4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)	Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.	5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
	6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Objections

Claims 1-7 are objected to because of the following informalities: In claim 1, at lines 5 and 6, "first pivot" and "second pivot" each should be introduced with the article --a-- (i.e. --a first pivot-- and --a second pivot--) in order to avoid potential lack of antecedent basis problems.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1-10, 12 and 17-20, as best understood, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Taylor 5,976,171).

Taylor discloses a retractor 310 comprising a laterally extending rack and first and second arms (see Figs. 13B and 16). For simplicity, reference will be made to only one of the arms, since both are the same. However, it is recognized that only one of the arms has a housing 332 slidably engaging the rack 312 and including an adjustment mechanism 324,326. The arms have a first segment, 330A,330B, a second segment, 360, and a third segment, 338. The segments are hinged together at 331 and 363. The middle segment of both arms is angled toward the other arm by virtue of the outwardly

angled portion of the "Y" shape forming the middle segment (see Fig. 13B). A facet of this outwardly angled portion is visible on middle segment 362, and reference numeral 360 points directly at the opposite angled facet. The angles between the first and middle segments on each arm and between the middle and third segments on each arm are equal, as both segments are identical. The first segments of the arms are parallel both at their base (the base of the "Y", i.e. 364) and at portion 368A,368B (again referring only to one of the arms). The third segments are parallel to each other at least along a portion thereof. The third segment is capable of being laterally displaced toward the first arm relative to the first segment thereof, at least by movement of the arms along the rack. The same device 310 alternatively includes rotation means 30 for allowing the arms to rotate about a longitudinal axis, e.g. A2, (see Fig. 16 and col. 13, lines 4-17). Both arms are rotatable. It is also noted that when the first segment of an arm rotates, so does the middle segment and the third segment at the end of the arm. Thus, when the first segments are rotated toward or away from each other, the third segments are capable of being displaced laterally relative to the first segments toward each other respective arm. Rotation means 30 is operable to lock the middle segment at a desired angular orientation about axis A2 (id.).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claim 11 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Taylor (5,976,171) in view of Farley (4,989,587).

Taylor discloses the claimed invention except for providing both arms with a slidable housing and an adjustment mechanism. Farley discloses a retractor 19, wherein both arms 31 and 33 are provided with a slidable housing with an adjustment mechanism in order to facilitate independent movement and placement of the arms and allow a safer and more effective procedure (see Fig. 2; col. 1, lines 14-18; col. 4, lines 59-66; and col. 5, lines 16-19 and 33-34). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide the retractor of Taylor with both arms having a slidable housing and an adjustment mechanism, in view of Farley, in order to facilitate independent movement and placement of the arms and allow a safer and more effective procedure.

Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Taylor (5,976,171).

Taylor discloses the claimed invention except for the locking means being a lever. However, levers and threaded clamps are prevalent and equivalent structures for applying a clamping force to an object, known in the art. Because these two locking means were known functional equivalents at the time of the invention, a person of ordinary skill in the art would have found it obvious to substitute a lever for a threaded clamp to apply clamping force.

Claim 16 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Taylor (5,976,171) in view of Wright et al. (5,772,583).

Taylor discloses the claimed invention except for the rack having a domed shape. Wright et al. disclose a retractor 100 having a rack 110 provided with a dome shape to safely provide a natural surgical opening while not obstructing the surgeon's view of the work area (see Figs. 1-3; col. 1, line 16; col. 2, lines 12-18; and col. 3, lines 19-24). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide the retractor of Taylor with a dome shape, in view of Wright et al., in order to safely provide a natural surgical opening while not obstructing the surgeon's view of the work area.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 21 March 2005, have been fully considered but are not persuasive.

The Taylor reference still admits of interpretation within the structural limitations set forth in the amended claims. Examiner generally recommends--while not suggesting any specific claim language--that applicant further add that the when the pivot axes are parallel to the rack, the middle hinged segment and the third segment are capable of rotating about the axes while the segments remain in the laterally offset configuration that is set forth in the claims. This capability is not present in Taylor because the corresponding axes would be perpendicular to the rack in order to assume the offset configuration. Applicant is reminded that no new matter may be added; thus, the noted amendment must rely on language from the specification or on features shown in the drawings. Support for the amendment should be explicitly set forth.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to David Comstock whose telephone number is (571) 272-4710. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



D. Comstock
3 April 2006



EDUARDO C. ROBERT
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER